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Old School or New School?

The two best ways to bar yourself from new ideas in sales and sales management training are to label a trainer as “old school” and decide that people in your market do not like the techniques discussed. Both of these allow a person to stay the way they are without being upset by new ideas.

Do ‘old school’ sales techniques still work?

Do You Want to Stay the Same?

If you are happy with what you make, there is no need to change. If you want to make more, you need to try new ideas and keep an open mind. There is always room to learn in our profession, and the day you stop trying new things in sales is the day your career starts to slowly die.

People Here Are Not Like That

The easiest way to stop learning is to decide that you live in a unique market that is really different and requires completely different sales techniques. I have sold in several countries and in states in every part of the U.S., and I have found that people buy the same way in all locations. The words may have to be customized and the pace may have to change, but the basic principles are the same. When you are presented with sales or management training, try to keep an open mind and believe it will work in your marketplace enough to try it. After all, if you reject it without trying it, you definitely will not change or gain from it.

Old School Versus New School

Another great way to decide that you never have to change is to label any sales training or sales management training as old school. We have had to evolve our training as the market has changed, but mostly it is words, pace and style that have changed, not the basic principles. One of the problems with “new school” is that while those proponents of new school techniques decry old school, they often offer no proposals for actual techniques. Often, new school advocates offer

training that is based on theory and has not been proven in our industry. As we know from other fields, many new theories sound great but do not work in practice.

Take a Look at Love

People will not buy until they fall in love with your products or services. They need to want them more than the money it takes to buy them. People buy for emotional reasons, just as they fall in love for emotional reasons. Styles and terms may change, but the basic techniques for falling in love have not changed in centuries.

My nephew recently moved to Japan for business. Even though he did not speak Japanese, he was able to fall in love with a Japanese woman and is now married with two kids. People fall in love and make buying decisions the same way all over the world. Until you find that people fall in love differently than they used to, basic sales techniques will not need to be changed. Styles, however, do need to evolve with the times and with popular culture.

Look at What Succeeds

One good way to check any assumption you have as to what works and what does not is to check with successful dealers and salespeople and see what techniques they use. I am fortunate to work with several very large Culligan dealers, Kinetico dealers, Ecowater dealers and others who report that the techniques that worked ten years ago still work today. That is not to say they have not updated their style as markets have evolved, however.

What Has Changed in Water Equipment Sales?

Consider what has changed in our business so you can evolve with your market. Here are some of the most important changes:

1. Who is Buying?

It used to be the man of the house who bought equipment. That is why the demo was technical and emphasized science, engineering and savings. Our questionnaires show that 85% of the buying decisions are now made by women, so demos have become more lifestyle oriented, with savings used to justify the purchase after they have fallen in love with improved water.

2. Trust is in Appearance

People used to love it if the water guy drove up in an old truck and looked like he was not making any money. They felt they would get a good deal. Now, customers do not trust people who do not have an all-around professional appearance. Today’s customer goes more by appearance than ever before, rather than on what you say when you arrive.

3. Earn Trust Before Selling

Customers have never been more skeptical and have never had such a high resistance to buying. It is very important to earn their trust before selling and even before offering to test their water. You earn trust by appearance and by giving something of value before you sell. It could be a blanket that will save them energy on their water heater or it could be a special report on the local water.

Before you make up your mind that techniques are old school or will not work in your area, do some research as to what successful dealers and salespeople are using. Stick to the basics that have worked for centuries, but change your style to adapt to today’s market. I know you will be glad you did and that your sales will reflect your efforts. *wqp*

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